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# LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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## A 'SIRIUS' SITUATION by Senator Larry Craig

The temperature is rising; activity is slowing; progress has stopped altogether. Hey, it must be the Dog Days – those stagnant, breathless summer days named for the heavenly prominence of the Dog Star Sirius in July and August.

The Dog Days have hit the U.S. Senate, too – as reflected in a huge backlog of critical legislation stymied by the combination of election year politicking and institutional dysfunction. The Majority party recently blocked votes on increasing domestic energy production to help lower gas prices and achieve energy independence, provoking a legislative standoff on the Senate floor.

Tax breaks important to all Americans are on the verge of expiring if a so-called “tax extender” bill is not acted upon soon. Children will soon go back to school, but Congress has not yet approved legislation to help communities hard-hit by expiration of the funding in the Craig-Wyden Secure Rural Schools law. The 13 annual bills funding the operations of all the departments of the federal government are still awaiting consideration, including millions of dollars I have secured for Idaho communities, agencies, and institutions.

This isn't even a complete list – and it's all the more alarming because so little time remains in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. The current plans of Democratic leadership have us adjourning September 26 for the elections, and not reconvening.

But some progress benefiting Idaho was made before the Dog Days hit.

For example, I was pleased that this year began with approval of a long list of Idaho funding priorities that I had worked for in the Senate Appropriations Committee, including hundreds of millions of dollars for projects at the Idaho National Laboratory, Idaho roads and bridges, Boise's new Air Traffic Control Tower, improved health services in hospitals and medical centers throughout our State, key projects at both

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Gowen Field and Mountain Home Air Force Base, agricultural research programs, infrastructure funding for a number of small communities, higher education research at Idaho’s colleges and universities, and support for the Special Olympics World Winter Games – among other things.

Congress also finalized a new Farm Bill containing the first ever specialty crops title which I helped write, and the new law will provide critical assistance for important Idaho commodities. Additionally, enactment of the new Water Resources Development legislation will authorize key water projects in our State. Three bills I introduced with the Idaho delegation and helped get enacted were the Minidoka National Historic Site Act, the Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act, and the American Falls Reservoir District Number 2 Conveyance Act.

The President just signed into law a package addressing the nation’s housing crisis. While it contained some controversial provisions, it also included language I advocated, offering a tax credit of up to \$7,500 to first-time home buyers.

There were additional successes for Idaho that did not involve an actual bill crossing the finish line. For instance, I won a commitment from the Air Force to construct a new Logistics Readiness Center at Mountain Home Air Force Base. The Senate confirmed former Idaho resident Kristine Svinicki, my former senior policy advisor, to serve on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The Department of Defense agreed to make a change I and others had advocated, increasing TRICARE reimbursement rates for Critical Access Hospitals including Elmore Medical Center.

I’ll be working hard to add other items to this list, before the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress ceases to exist. But those Dog Days don’t seem to be ending any time soon.